

## Assembly Committee on Elections and Constitutional Law

Testimony of Kevin J. Kennedy  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin State Elections Board  
May 31, 2007

Chairman Albers and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee and testify in favor of Assembly Bill 295.

Wisconsin Act 265 enacted April 15, 2004 created Section 6.36 (1) (b)1.a., which designated the "registration identification number" as confidential and only accessible to election officials. This was a drafting error.

The identification number that the Wisconsin State Elections Board uses in the Statewide Voter Registration System is a number assigned by the system to every voter record as it is entered into the system. This number may have been assigned during a mass conversion effort in 2005 and 2006, or on an individual basis as new voter applications are entered. This number has no meaning to anyone except the election official who is managing the Statewide Voter Registration System data for that particular county or municipality.

This number is printed on the poll books in numeric and bar code form. After the election, the election worker scans this number for every voter who voted in the election. This enables us to maintain a voter history and is necessary to quickly and accurately update the database.

The confidential designation of this number is causing election officials to take additional steps which take up their valuable time. At the polling place, poll workers must cover the right hand column of the poll book so the public may not see this number. Compliance will be difficult next year as the poll workers deal with the high turnout of a presidential election. If the municipal clerk is selling a copy of the poll book to the customer, she needs to "mask" the voter identification number on each page before copying.

Thank you for considering this request. Your local election officials will appreciate your action today.



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## **Testimony on Assembly Bill 295 (public access to voter registration identification)**

### **Assembly Committee on Elections and Constitutional Law**

**Thursday, May 31, 2007**

Thank you for holding this hearing today. We testify on Assembly Bill 295 for information only.

The official voter registration list is a public record open for public inspection subject only to specified statutory exceptions outlined in Wis. Stats. 6.36(1)(b). Those exceptions as currently written include the unique voter registration identification numbers for each registered voter. The law has been in effect for more than three years, and as recently as July 2006 the Elections Board was advising local elections officials of the confidentiality requirements of the law without expressing any concern about the way the law was written. It was not until the Elections Board discovered it could not find a way to comply with the voter privacy law and remove the confidential voter registration numbers without making its computerized system inoperative that concerns were raised about supposed flaws in the law. The subsequent drafting of this legislation is a means to obscure the larger and more important issue – the incompetence of the global outsourcing firm chosen by the Elections Board to create the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS).

The Board staff admitted back in 2006 that when utilizing the SVRS developed by Accenture it is always necessary to input the voter registration numbers to properly operate the software system and to complete such tasks as maintaining voter histories and complying with other requirements mandated by Wisconsin law and the HAVA. There are no methods for removing the numbers from the system that would keep the system operative when performing these necessary functions.

Accenture developed a standardized software system which it intended to use in multiple states to create each state's voter file. Contrary to contract agreements, they failed to customize the software system taking into account the specifics of Wisconsin's elections laws and needs. A statutory change allows the Board to further avoid addressing Accenture's inadequacies. After spending millions of dollars, the state has received from Accenture a legally and practically unworkable voter file system. The Elections Board's preferred remedy to one aspect of this boondoggle is to change the law that Accenture has not figured out a way to comply with. AB 295 serves no useful purpose to voters. Its only purpose is to cover up for the fact that Accenture can't program its way out of a paper bag.